

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 15, 2014

TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

FROM: SANDRA MARKS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, TRANSPORTATION & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM #4 – WEST END TRANSITWAY (CORRIDOR C) ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS/ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT UPDATE

ISSUE: Update on the West End Transitway (Corridor C) Alternatives Analysis/Environmental Assessment

RECOMMENDATION: That the Transportation Commission:

1. Receive an update on planned public outreach and stakeholder coordination,
2. Receive an update on Definition of Alternatives and Evaluation Measures analysis, and
3. Receive an update on project next steps.

BACKGROUND: The City's Transportation Master Plan, adopted by Council in 2008, identified three priority corridors that would offer high-quality, high capacity, and reliable transit service along three corridors: US Route 1, Duke Street/Eisenhower Avenue, and Van Dorn Street /Beauregard Street.

In 2010, the City conducted the Transitway Corridor Feasibility Study which resulted in recommendations such as route alignment, cross-sections, methods of operation, vehicle type, land use, ridership, and early-stage cost estimates for all three corridors.

In December 2013, the City kicked off an Alternatives Analysis (AA) and Environmental Assessment (EA) to analyze and refine the alignment as defined by the Feasibility Study and City Council and to identify any impacts and potential mitigation associated with the recommended alternative. The study is partially funded by a grant from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and is the first step towards applying for a federal Small Starts grant for project design and construction.

DISCUSSION:

Public Outreach and Stakeholder Coordination

The City will host the second AA/EA public meeting at 6:30 p.m. on October 22, 2014 at the Pavilion at Mark Center (5708 Merton Court, Alexandria, VA, 22311). The meeting will include a project status update, an overview of the three alternatives being studied, a presentation of the initial results of applying the evaluation measures to each alternative, and project next steps. The meeting format will feature many opportunities for attendees to provide comments and feedback.

Leading up to the public meeting, the project team is working with organizations along the Corridor to advertise the meeting, including: JBG Properties, Southern Towers apartment complex, the Mark Center, and Northern Virginia Community College. Project team members are also distributing flyers and rack cards to businesses, schools, libraries, recreational centers, and at key bus facilities such as Van Dorn Metrorail station, Landmark Mall Transit Center, Mark Center Transit Center, and Pentagon Transit Center.

Since the last Transportation Commission briefing in July 2014, the West End Transitway Policy Advisory Group has met twice to discuss design options that refine the corridor alignment, evaluation measures used to evaluate each alternative, service patterns, and the definition of the three study alternatives. The next West End Policy Advisory Group meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. on Thursday, October 23, 2014 at City Hall, 301 King Street. The meeting will focus on the results of the evaluation measures and the feedback received from the October 22nd public meeting.

Definition of Alternatives and Evaluation Measures

The Definition of Alternatives is a key step in the AA process since it defines the core physical and operational attributes of each alternative. As the evaluation measures are applied to each alternative, the differences between each alternative becomes clearer and the continuum of cost and benefits becomes more pronounced. The results of the analysis will provide the basis for the eventual selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative.

Section 106 / Cultural Resources

At the request of FTA staff, the City hosted a corridor tour for representatives from FTA and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR). The goal of the tour was to identify any potential environmental, cultural, historic, and environmental justice impacts along the corridor. After the tour, representatives from FTA and VDHR had further discussions, and informed the project team that they did not identify any issues along the corridor, and that the Section 106 process could potentially be streamlined. Any final decisions by FTA and VDHR related to the Section 106 process will be reflected in the Environmental Assessment.

FISCAL IMPACT: The AA/EA is being funded through federal grants. The support provided by staff will be conducted within the allocated operational budgets for each department, and the support provided by consultants has been assumed in their contract.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Project Schedule, including Public Outreach and Stakeholder Coordination